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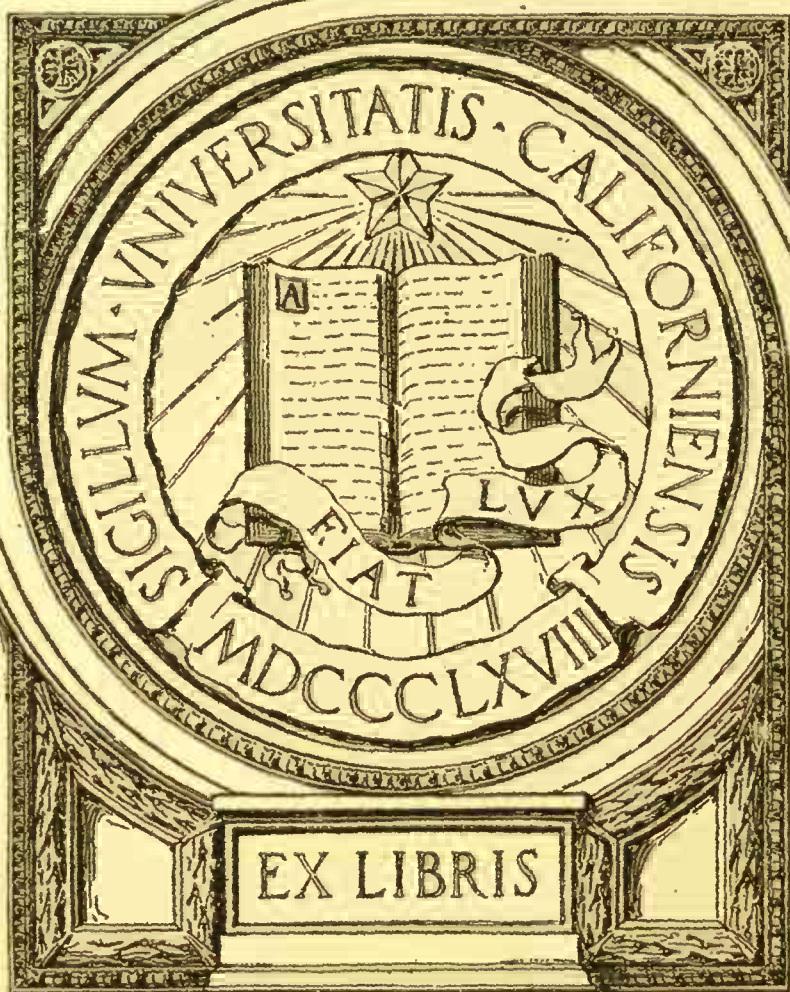
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THE GIRL and THE KINGDOM



THE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

The Girl and the Kingdom

LEARNING TO TEACH

—WRITTEN BY—

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN



Presented to the
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Women's Clubs

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TO THE
LIBRARY OF THE
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Kate Douglas Wiggin

The Girl and the Kingdom

LEARNING TO TEACH

A LONG, busy street in San Francisco. Innumerable small shops lined it from north to south; horse cars, always crowded with passengers, hurried to and fro; narrow streets intersected the broader one, these built up with small dwellings, most of them rather neglected by their owners. In the middle distance other narrow streets and alleys where taller houses stood, and the windows, fire escapes, and balconies of these, added great variety to the landscape, as the families housed there kept most of their effects on the outside during the long dry season.

Still farther away were the roofs, chimneys and smoke stacks of mammoth buildings—railway sheds, freight depots, power houses and the like—with finally a glimpse of docks and wharves and shipping. This, or at least a considerable section of it, was the kingdom. To the ordinary beholder it might have looked ugly, crowded, sordid, undesirable, but it appeared none of

these things to the lucky person who had been invested with some sort of modest authority in its affairs.

The throne from which the lucky person viewed the empire was humble enough. It was the highest of the tin shop steps at the corner of Silver and Third streets, odd place for a throne, but one commanding a fine view of the inhabitants, their dwellings, and their activities. The activities in plain sight were somewhat limited in variety, but the signs sported the names of nearly every nation upon the earth. The Shubeners, Levis, Ezekiels and Appels were generally in tailoring or secondhand furniture and clothing, while the Raffertys, O'Flanagans and McDougalls dispensed liquor. All the most desirable sites were occupied by saloons, for it was practically impossible to quench the thirst of the neighborhood, though many were engaged in a valiant effort to do so. There were also in evidence, barbers, joiners, plumbers, grocers, fruit-sellers, bakers and venders of small wares, and there was the largest and most splendidly recruited army of do-nothings that the sun ever shone upon. These forever-out-of-workers, leaning against every lamp post, fence picket, corner house, and barber pole in the vicinity, were all male, but they were mostly mated to women fully worthy of them, their wives doing nothing with equal assiduity in the back

streets hard by. —Stay, they did one thing, they added copiously to the world's population; and indeed it seemed as if the families in the community that ought to have had few children, or none at all, (for their country's good) had the strongest prejudice to race suicide. Well, there was the kingdom and there were the dwellers therein, and the lucky person on the steps was a girl. She did not know at first that it was a kingdom, and the kingdom never at any time would have recognized itself under that name, for it was anything but a sentimental neighborhood. The girl was somewhat too young for the work she was going to do, and considerably too inexperienced, but she had a kindergarten diploma in her pocket, and being an ardent follower of Froebel she thought a good many roses might blossom in the desert of Tar Flat, the rather uneuphonious name of the kingdom.

Here the discreet anonymity of the third person must be cast aside and the regrettable egotism of the first person allowed to enter, for I was a girl, and the modest chronicle of my early educational and philanthropic adventures must be told after the manner of other chronicles.

The building in Silver Street which was to be the scene of such beautiful and inspiring doings (I hoped) as had been seldom observed on this planet, was pleasant

and commodious. It had been occupied by two classes of an overcrowded primary school, which had now been removed to a fine modern building. The two rooms rented for this pioneer free kindergarten of the Pacific Coast were (Alas!) in the second story but were large and sunny. A broad flight of twenty wooden steps led from street to first floor and a long stairway connected that floor with the one above. If anyone had realized what those fifty or sixty stairs meant to the new enterprise, in labor and weariness, in wasted time and strength of teachers and children—but it was difficult to find ideal conditions in a crowded neighborhood.

The first few days after my arrival in San Francisco were spent in the installing of stove, piano, tables, benches and working materials, and then the beautifying began, the creation of a room so attractive and homelike, so friendly in its atmosphere, that its charm would be felt by every child who entered it. I was a stranger in a strange city, my only acquaintances being the trustees of the newly formed Association. These naturally had no technical knowledge, (I am speaking of the Dark Ages, when there were but two or three trained kindergartners west of the Rocky Mountains) and the practical organization of things—a kindergarten of fifty children in active operation—this was my depart-

ment. When I had anything to show them they were eager and willing to help, meantime they could and did furnish the sinews of war, standing sponsors to the community for the ideals in education we were endeavoring to represent. Here is where the tin shop steps came in. I sat there very often in those sunny days of late July, 1878, dreaming dreams and seeing visions; plotting, planning, helping, believing, forecasting the future. "Hills peeped o'er hills and Alps on Alps."

I take some credit to myself that when there were yet no such things as Settlements and Neighborhood Guilds I had an instinct that this was the right way to work.

"This school," I thought, "must not be an exotic, a parasite, an alien growth, not a flower of beauty transplanted from a conservatory and shown under glass; it must have its roots deep in the neighborhood life, and there my roots must be also. No teacher, be she ever so gifted, ever so consecrated, can sufficiently influence the children under her care for only a few hours a day, unless she can gradually persuade the parents to be her allies. I must find then the desired fifty children under school age (six years in California) and I must somehow keep in close relation to the homes from which they come."

How should I get in intimate touch with this strange, puzzling, foreign community,

this big clump of poverty-stricken, intemperate, overworked, lazy, extravagant, ill-assorted humanity leavened here and there by a God-fearing, thrifty, respectable family? There were from time to time children of widows who were living frugally and doing their best for their families who proved to be the leaven in my rather sorry lump.

Buying and borrowing were my first two aids to fellowship. I bought my luncheon at a different bakery every day and my glass of milk at a different dairy. At each visit I talked, always casually, of the new kindergarten, and gave its date of opening, but never "solicited" pupils. I bought pencils, crayons, and mucilage of the local stationers; brown paper and soap of the grocers; hammers and tacks of the hardware man. I borrowed many things, returned them soon, and thus gave my neighbors the satisfaction of being helpful. When I tried to borrow the local carpenter's saw he answered that he would rather come and do the job himself than lend his saw to a lady. The combination of a lady and edged tools was something in his mind so humorous that I nervously changed the subject. (If he is still alive I am sure *he* is an Anti-Suffragist!) I was glad to display my school room to an intelligent workman, and a half hour's explanation of the kindergarten occupations made the carpenter an enthus-

iastic convert. This gave me a new idea, and to each craftsman, in the vicinity, I showed the particular branch of kindergarten handiwork that might appeal to him, whether laying of patterns, in separate sticks and tablets, weaving, drawing, rudimentary efforts at designing, folding and cutting of paper, or clay modelling.

I had the great advantage of making all of my calls in shops, and thus I had not the unpleasant duty of visiting people's houses uninvited, nor the embarrassment of being treated as peddlers of patronage and good advice are apt to be treated. Besides, in many cases, the shops and homes (Heaven save the mark!) were under one roof, and children scuttled in and out, behind and under the counters and over the thresholds into the street. They were all agog with curiosity and so were the women. A mother does not have to be highly cultured to perceive the advantage of a place near by where she can send her four or five year olds free of charge and know that they are busy and happy for several hours a day.

I know, by long experience with younger kindergartners and social workers in after years, that this kind of "visiting" presents many perplexities to persons of a certain temperament, but I never entered any house where I felt the least sensation of being out of place. I don't think this flexibility

is a gift of especially high order, nor that it would be equally valuable in all walks of life, but it is of great service in this sort of work. Whether I sat in a stuffed chair or on a nailkeg or an inverted washtub it was always equally agreeable to me. The "getting into relation," perfectly, and without the loss of a moment, gave me a sense of mental and spiritual exhilaration. I never had to adapt myself elaborately to a strange situation in order to be in sympathy. I never said to myself: "But for God's grace I might be the woman on that cot; unloved, uncared for, with a new-born child at my side and a dozen men drinking in the saloon just on the other side of the wall * * * or that mother of five—convivial, dishonest, unfaithful * * * or that timid, frail, little creature struggling to support a paralytic husband." I never had to give myself logical reasons for being where I was, nor wonder what I should say; my one idea was to keep the situation simple and free from embarrassment to any one; to be as completely a part of it as if I had been born there; to be helpful without being intrusive; to show no surprise whatever happened; above all to be cheerful, strong and bracing, not weakly sentimental.

As the day of opening approached an unexpected and valuable aide-de-camp appeared on the scene. An American girl of twelve or thirteen slipped in the front door

one day when I was practicing children's songs, whereupon the following colloquy ensued.

"What's this place goin' to be?"

"A kindergarten."

"What's that?"

Explanation suited to the questioner, followed.

"Can I come in afternoons, on my way home from school and see what you do?"

"Certainly."

"Can I stay now and help round?"

"Yes indeed, I should be delighted."

"What's the bird for?"

"What are all birds for?" I answered, just to puzzle her.

"I dunno. What's the plants and flowers for?"

"What are all flowers for?" I demanded again.

"But I thought 'twas a school."

"It is, but it's a new kind."

"Where's the books?"

"The children are going to be under six; we shan't have reading and writing."

We sat down to work together, marking out and cutting brown paper envelopes for the children's sewing or weaving, binding colored prints with gold paper and putting them on the wall with thumb tacks, and arranging all the kindergarten materials tidily on the shelves of the closets. Next day was a holiday and she begged to come again. I

consented and told her that she might bring a friend if she liked and we would lunch together.

"I guess not," she said, with just a hint of jealousy in her tone. "You and I get on so well that mebbe we'd be bothered with another girl messin' around, and she'd be one more to wash up for after lunch."

From that moment, the Corporal, as I called her, was a stanch ally and there was seldom a day in the coming years when she did not faithfully perform all sorts of unofficial duties, attaching herself passionately to my service with the devotion of a mother or an elder sister. She proved at the beginning a kind of travelling agent for the school haranguing mothers on the street corners and addressing the groups of curious children who gathered at the foot of the school steps.

"You'd ought to go upstairs and see the *inside* of it!" she would exclaim. "It's just like going around the world. There's a canary bird, there's fishes swimmin' in a glass bowl, there's plants bloomin' on the winder sills, there's a pianner, and more'n a million pictures! There's closets stuffed full o' things to play and work with, and whatever the scholars make they're goin' to take home if it's good. There's a play-room with red rings painted on the floor and they're going to march and play games on 'em. She can play the pianner standin' up

or settin' down, without lookin' at her hands to see where they're goin'. She's goin' to wear white, two a week, and I got Miss Lannigan to wash 'em for her for fifteen cents apiece. I tell her the children 'round here's awful dirty and she says the cleaner she is the cleaner they'll be. . . . 'tain't goin' to be no Sunday School," said the voluble Corporal. "No, 'tain't goin' to be no Mission; no, 'tain't goin' to be no college! She says it's a new kind of a school that's all I know, and next Monday'll see 'em goin' full blast!"

It was somewhat in this fashion, that I walked joyously into the heart of a San Francisco slum, and began experimenting with my newly-learned panaceas.

These were early days. The kindergarten theory of education was on trial for its very life; the fame of Pestalozzi and Froebel seemed to my youthful vision to be in my keeping, and I had all the ardor of a neophyte. I simply stepped into a cockleshell and put out into an unknown ocean, where all manner of derelicts needed help and succor. The ocean was a life of which I had heretofore known nothing; miserable, overburdened, and sometimes criminal.

My cockleshell managed to escape shipwreck, and took its frail place among the other craft that sailed in its company. I hardly saw or felt the safety of the harbor or the shore for three years, the three years

out of my whole life the most wearying, the most heart-searching, the most discouraging, the most inspiring; also, I dare say, the best worth living.

"Full blast," the Corporal's own expression, exactly described the setting out of the cockle-shell; that is, the eventful Monday morning when the doors of the first free kindergarten west of the Rockies threw open its doors.

The neighborhood was enthusiastic in presenting its offspring at the altar of educational experiment, and we might have enrolled a hundred children had there been room. I was to have no assistant and we had provided seats only for forty-five, which prohibited a list of more than fifty at the outside. A convert to any inspiring idea being anxious to immolate herself on the first altar which comes in the path of duty, I carefully selected the children best calculated to show to the amazed public the regenerating effects of the kindergarten method, and as a whole they were unsurpassed specimens of the class we hoped to benefit.

Of the forty who were accepted the first morning, thirty appeared to be either indifferent or willing victims, while ten were quite the reverse. These screamed if the maternal hand were withdrawn, bawled if their hats were taken away, and bellowed if they were asked to sit down. This rebellion led

to their being removed to the hall by their mothers, who spanked them vigorously every few minutes and returned them to me each time in a more unconquered state, with their lung power quite unimpaired and their views of the New Education still vague and distorted. As the mothers were uniformly ladies with ruffled hair, snapping eyes, high color and short temper, I could not understand the childrens' fear of me, a mild young thing "in white"—as the Corporal would say—but they evidently preferred the ills they knew. When the last mother led in the last freshly spanked child and said as she prepared to leave: "Well, I suppose they might as well get used to you one time as another, so good-day, Miss, and God help you!" I felt that my woes were greater than I could bear, for, as the door closed, several infants who had been quite calm began to howl in sympathy with their suffering brethren. Then the door opened again and the Corporal's bright face appeared in the crack.

"Goodness!" she ejaculated, "this ain't the new kind of a school I thought 'twas goin' to be!—Stop your cryin', Jimmy Maxwell, a great big boy like you; and Levi Isaacs and Goldine Gump, I wonder you ain't ashamed! Do you 'spose Miss Kate can do anything with such a racket? Now don't let me hear any more o' your nonsense!—Miss Kate," she whispered, turn-

ing to me: "I've got the whole day off for my uncle's funeral, and as he ain't buried till three o'clock I thought I'd better run in and see how you was gettin' on!"

"You are an angel, Corporal!" I said. "Take all the howlers down into the yard and let them play in the sand tables till I call you."

When the queue of weeping babes had been sternly led out by the Corporal something like peace descended upon the room but there could be no work for the moment because the hands were too dirty. Coöperation was strictly Froebelian so I selected with an eagle eye several assistants from the group—the brightest-eyed, best-tempered, and cleanest. With their help I arranged the seats, the older children at the back tables and the babies in the front. Classification was difficult as many of them did not know their names, their ages, their sexes, nor their addresses, but I had succeeded in getting a little order out of chaos by the time the Corporal appeared again.

"They've all stopped cryin' but Hazel Golly, and she ran when I wa'n't lookin' and got so far I couldn't ketch her; anyway she ain't no loss for I live next door to her.—What'll we do next?"

"Scrub!" I said firmly. "I want to give them some of the easiest work, two kinds, but we can't touch the colored cards until all the hands are clean.—Shall we take soap

and towels and all go down into the yard where the sink is, children, and turn up our sleeves and have a nice wash?" (Some of the infants had doubtless started from home in a tolerable state of cleanliness but all signs had disappeared en route).

The proposition was greeted amiably. "Anything rather than sit still!" is the mental attitude of a child under six!

"I told you just how dirty they'd be," murmured the Corporal. "I know 'em; but I never expected to get this good chance to scrub any of 'em."

"It's only the first day;—wait till *next* Monday," I urged.

"I shan't be here to see it *next* Monday morning," my young friend replied. "We can't bury Uncle *every* week!" (This with a sigh of profound regret!)

Many days were spent in learning the unpronounceable names of my flock and in keeping them from murdering one another until Froebel's justly celebrated "law of love" could be made a working proposition. It was some time before the babies could go down stairs in a line without precipitating one another head foremost by furtive kicks and punches. I placed an especially dependable boy at the head and tail of the line but accidentally overheard the tail boy tell the head that he'd lay him out flat if he got into the yard first, a threat that embarrassed a free and expedi-

tious exit:—and all their relations to one another seemed at this time to be arranged on a broad basis of belligerence. But better days were coming, were indeed near at hand, and the children themselves brought them; they only needed to be shown how, but you may well guess that in the early days of what was afterwards to be known as “The Kindergarten Movement on the Pacific Coast,” when the Girl and her Kingdom first came into active communication with each other, the question of discipline loomed rather large! Putting aside altogether the question of the efficiency, or the propriety, of corporal punishment in the public schools, it seems pretty clear that babies of four or five years should be spanked by their parents if by anyone; and that a teacher who cannot induce good behavior in children of that age, without spanking, has mistaken her vocation. However, it is against their principles for kindergartner’s to spank, slap, flog, shake or otherwise wrestle with their youthful charges, no matter how much they seem to need these instantaneous and sometimes very effectual methods of dissuasion at the moment.

There are undoubtedly times when the old Adam (I don’t know why it shouldn’t be the Old Eve!) rises in one’s still unregenerate heart, and one longs to take the “low road” in discipline; but the “high

road" commonly leads one to the desired point without great delay and there is genuine satisfaction in finding that taking away his work from a child, or depriving him of the pleasure of helping his neighbors, is as great a punishment as a blow.

You may say such ideal methods would not prevail with older boys and girls, and that may be true, for wrong development may have gone too far; but it is difficult to find a small child who is lazy or indifferent, or one who would welcome the loss of work; difficult also to find one who is not unhappy when deprived of the chance of service, seeing, as he does, his neighbors happily working together and joyfully helping others.

I had many Waterloos in my term of generalship and many a time was I a feeble enough officer of "The Kid's Guards" as the kindergarten was translated in Tar Flat by those unfamiliar with the German word.

The flock was at the foot of the stairs one morning at eleven o'clock when there was a loud and long fire alarm in the immediate vicinity. No doubt existed in the mind of any child as to the propriety or advisability of remaining at the seat of learning. They started down the steps for the fire in a solid body, with such unanimity and rapidity that I could do nothing but save the lives of the younger ones and keep them from being trampled upon while

I watched the flight of their elders. I was left with two lame boys and four babies so fat and bow-legged that they probably never had reached, nor ever would reach, a fire while it was still burning.

Pat Higgins, aged five and a half, the leader of the line, had a sudden pang of conscience at the corner and ran back to ask me artlessly if he might "go to the fire."

"Certainly not," I answered firmly. On the contrary please stay here with the lame and the fat, while *I* go to the fire and bring back the other children."

I then pursued the errant flock and recovering most of them, marched them back to the school-room, meeting Judge Solomon Heydenfelt, President of the new Kindergarten Association, on the steps. He had been awaiting me for ten minutes and it was his first visit! He had never seen a kindergarten before, either returning from a fire or otherwise, and there was a moment of embarrassment, but I had a sense of humor and fortunately he enjoyed the same blessing. Only very young teachers who await the visits of supervisors in shuddering expectancy can appreciate this episode.

The days grew brighter and more hopeful as winter approached. I got into closer relation with some homes than others, and I soon had half a dozen five-year-olds who came to the kindergarten clean, and if not

whole, well darned and patched. One of these could superintend a row of babies at their outline sewing, thread their needles, untangle their everlasting knots, and correct the mistakes in the design by the jabbing of wrong holes in the card. Another was very skillful at weaving and proved a good assistant in that occupation.

I developed also a little body guard which was efficient in making a serener and more harmonious atmosphere. It is neither wise nor kind to burden a child with responsibilities too heavy or irksome for his years. but surely it is never too early to allow him to be helpful to his fellows and considerate of his elders. I can't believe that any of the tiny creatures on whom I leaned in those weary days were the worse for my leaning. The more I depended on them the greater was their dependableness, and the little girls grew more tender, the boys more chivalrous. I had my subtle means of communication, spirit to spirit! If Pat Higgins, pausing on the verge of some regrettable audacity or hilarious piece of mischief, chanced to catch my eye, he desisted. He knew that I was saying to him silently: "You are not so very naughty. I could almost let you go on if it were not for those others who are always making trouble. Somebody *must* be good! I cannot bear it if you desert me!"

Whenever I said "Pat" or "Aaron" or

"Billy" in a pleading tone it meant "Help! or I perish!" and it was so construed. No, I was never left without succor when I was in need of it! I remember so well an afternoon in late October when the world had gone very wrong! There had been a disagreeable argument with Mrs. Gump, who had sent Goldine to mingle with the children when she knew she had chicken pox; Stanislas Strazinski had fallen down stairs and bruised his knee; Mercedes Pulaski had upset a vase of flowers on the piano keys and finally Petronius Nelson had stolen a red woolen ball. I had seen it in his hand and taken it from him sadly and quietly as he was going down the stairs. I suggested a few minutes for repentance in the play-room and when he came out he sat at my knee and sobbed out his grief in pitiful fashion. His tears moved my very heart. "Only four years old," I thought, "and no playthings at home half as attractive as the bright ones we have here, so I must be very gentle with him. I put my arm around him to draw him to me and the gesture brought me in contact with his curiously knobby, little chest. What were my feelings when I extracted from his sailor blouse one orange, one blue, and two green balls! And this after ten minutes of repentant tears! I pointed the moral as quickly as possible so that I might be alone, and then realizing the apparent hopeless-

ness of some of the tasks that confronted me I gave way to a moment of hysterical laughter, followed by such a flood of tears as I had not shed since I was a child. It was then and there the Corporal found me, on her way home from school. She flung her books on the floor and took my head on her kind, scrawny, young shoulder.

“What have they been doin’ to you?” she stormed. “You just tell me which one of ’em ’tis and I’ll see’t he remembers this day as long as he lives. Your hair’s all mussed up and you look sick abed!”

She led me to the sofa where we put tired babies to sleep, and covered me with my coat. Then she stole out and came back with a pitcher of hot, *well-boiled* tea, after which she tidied the room and made everything right for next day. Dear Old Corporal!

The improvement in these “little teachers” in capacity as well as in manner, voice, speech and behavior, was almost supernatural, and it was only less obvious in the rank and file. There was little “scrubbing” done on the premises now, for nearly all the mothers who were not invalids, intemperate, or incurable slatterns, were heartily in sympathy with our ideals. At the end of six weeks when various members of the Board of Trustees began to drop in for their second visit they were almost frightened by our attractive appearance.

"The subscribers will think the children come from Nob Hill," one of them exclaimed in humorous alarm. "Are you *sure* you took the most needy in every way?"

"Quite sure. Sit down in my chair, please, and look at my private book. Do you see in the first place that thirteen are the children of small liquor sellers and live back of the saloons? Then note that ten are the children of widows who support large families by washing, cleaning, machine sewing or shop-keeping. You will see that one mother and three fathers on our list are temporarily in jail serving short terms. We may never have quite such a picturesque class again, and perhaps it would not be advisable; I wish sometimes that I had taken humanity as it ran, good, bad and indifferent, instead of choosing children from the most discouraging homes. I thought, of course, that they were going to be little villains. They ought to be, if there is anything either in heredity or environment, but just look at them at this moment—a favorable moment, I grant you—but just look at them! Forty pretty-near-angels. that's what they are!"

"It is marvellous! I could adopt twenty of them! I cannot account for it, said another of the Trustees.

"I can," I answered. "Any tolerably healthy child under six who is clean, busy, happy and in good company looks as these

do. Why should they not be attractive? They live for four hours a day in this sunny, airy room; they do charming work suited to their baby capacities—work, too, which is not all pure routine, but in a simple way creative, so that they are not only occupied, but they are expressing themselves as creative beings should. They have music, stories and games, and although they are obliged to behave themselves (which is sometimes a trifle irksome) they never hear an unkind word. They grow in grace, partly because they return as many of these favors as is possible at their age. They water the plants, clean the bird's cage and fill the seed cups and bath; they keep the room as tidy as possible to make the janitor's work easier; they brush up the floor after their own muddy feet; the older ones help the younger and the strong look after the weak. The conditions are almost ideal; why should they not respond to them?"

California children are apt to be good specimens. They suffer no extremes of heat or cold; food is varied and fruit plentiful and cheap; they are out of doors every month in the year and they are more than ordinarily clever and lively. Still I refuse to believe that any other company of children in California, or in the universe, was ever so unusual or so piquantly interesting as those of the Silver Street Kindergarten, particularly the never-to-be-forgotten "first forty."

As I look back across the lapse of time I cannot understand how any creature, however young, strong or ardent, could have supported the fatigue and strain of that first year! No one was to blame, for the experiment met with appreciation almost immediately, but I was attempting the impossible, and trying to perform the labor of three women. I soon learned to work more skillfully, but I habitually squandered my powers and lavished on trivial details strength that should have been spent more thriftily. The difficulties of each day could be surmounted only by quick wit, ingenuity, versatility; by the sternest exercise of self-control and by a continual outpour of magnetism. My enthusiasm made me reckless, but though I regret that I worked in entire disregard of all laws of health, I do not regret a single hour of exhaustion, discouragement or despair. All my pains were just so many birth-pangs, leaving behind them a little more knowledge of human nature, a little wider vision, a little clearer insight, a little deeper sympathy.

There were more than a thousand visitors during the first year, a circumstance that greatly increased the nervous strain of teaching; for I had to train myself, as well as the children to as absolute a state of unconsciousness as possible. I always jauntily described the visitors as "fathers and mothers," and told the children that there

would soon be other schools like ours, and people just wanted to see how we sang, and played circle games, and modelled in clay, and learned arithmetic with building blocks and all the rest of it. I paid practically no attention to the visitors myself and they ordinarily were clever enough to understand the difficulties of the situation. Among the earliest in the late autumn of 1878 were Prof. John Swett and Mrs. Kincaid of the San Francisco Normal School who thereafter sent down their students, two at a time, for observation and practical aid. The next important visitor in the spring of 1879 was Mrs. Sarah B. Cooper. She possessed the "understanding heart" and also great executive ability, so that with the help of her large Bible class she was able to open a second free Kindergarten on Jackson Street in October, 1879. Soon after this date the desert began to blossom as the rose. I went to the Eastern cities during my summer vacation and learned by observation and instruction all that I could from my older and wiser contemporaries Miss Susan Blow of St. Louis, Dr. Hailman of LaPorte, Mrs. Putnam of Chicago and Miss Elizabeth Peabody and Miss Garland of Boston. Returning I opened my own Kindergarten Training School and my sister Miss Nora Archibald Smith joined me both in the theoretical and practical spreading of the gospel.

Thirty-seven years have passed, but if I were a portrait painter I could reproduce on canvas every nose, eye, smile, hand, curl of hair, in that group. I often close my eyes to call up the picture, and almost every child falls into his old seat and answers to his right name. Here are a few sketches of those in the front row:

Willy Beer, dubbed Wriggly Beer by the older boys in his street, because of a slight nervous affection that kept him in a state of perpetual motion. He was not uncomely; indeed, when I was telling a story it was a pleasure to watch his face all twitching with interest; first nose, then eyes, then mouth, till the delight spread to his fat hands, which clasped and unclasped as the tale proceeded. He had a perfect sense of time and tunes and was indefatigable in the marching and games. His mother sent me this unique letter when he had been with me a month:

"Yung lady:

"Willy seems to be onto his foot most of the time. These is all the butes Willy will half to Krissmus. Can you learn him settin' down?"

Respeckfully,

"Mrs. Beer."

Sitting next to Willy, and rhyming with him, was Billy—Billy Prendergast—a large boy for his years with the face and voice of a man of thirty.

Billy Prendergast taught me a very good

lesson in pedagogy when I was making believe teach him other things!

One of our simple morning songs ended with the verse:

“All ye little children, hear the truth we tell,
God will ne’er forget you, for he loves you
well.”

One day in the gentle lull that succeeded the singing of that song, Billy’s growling baritone fell on my ear:

“Why will he never get yer?” he asked, his strange rough voice bringing complete silence, as it always did.

“What do you mean, Billy?”

“That’s what it says: ‘God will never get yer, for he loves you well.’”

Consternation overcame me. Billy, and goodness knows how many others, had been beginning the day with the puzzling theological statement: “God will never get yer (ne’er forget you) for he loves you well.”

I chose my verses more carefully, after that experience, avoiding all e’ers and ne’ers and other misleading abbreviations.

Hansanella Dorflinger now claims attention.

Hansanella sounds like one word but they were twins, and thus introduced to me by a large incoherent boy who brought them to the kindergarten. He was in a hurry and left them at my door with scant ceremony, save the frequent repetition of the watchword “Hansanella.”

After some difficulty I succeeded in deciding which was Hans and which was Ella, though there was practically no difference between them excepting that the ash blonde hair of Hans was cropped still more closely than that of Ella.

They had light blue glassy eyes, too far apart, thin lips, chalky skins and perennial colds in the head. They breathed together, smiled and wept together, rose and sat down together and wiped their noses together—none too frequently. Never were such 'twinneous' twins as Hansanella, and it was ridiculous to waste two names on them, for there was not between them personality enough for one child.

When I requested Ella to be a pony it immediately became a span, for she never moved without Hans. If the children chose Hans for the father-bird, Ella intrusively and suffragistically fluttered into the nest, too, sadly complicating the family arrangements. They seldom spoke, but sat stolidly beside each other, laying the same patterns with dogged pertinacity.

One morning a new little boy joined our company. As was often the case he was shy about sitting down. It would seem as if the spectacle of forty children working tranquilly together, would convince new applicants that the benches contained no dynamite, but they always parted with their dilapidated hats as if they never, in the

nature of things, could hope to see them again, and the very contact of their persons with the benches evoked an uncontrollable wail, which seemed to say: "It is all up with us now! Let the portcullis fall!"

The new boy's eye fell on Hansanella and he suddenly smiled broadly.

"Sit mit Owgoost!" he said.

"We haven't any 'August'," I responded, "that is Hans Dorflinger."

"Sit mit Owgoost." he repeated thickly and firmly.

"Is this boy a friend of yours, Hans?" I inquired, and the twins nodded blandly.

"Is your other name August, Hans?"

This apparently was too complicated a question for the combined mental activities of the pair, and they lapsed comfortably into their ordinary state of coma.

The Corporal finally found the boy who originally foisted upon our Paradise these two dullest human beings that ever drew breath. He explained that I had entirely misunderstood his remarks. He said that he heard I had accepted Hansanella Dorflinger, but they had moved with their parents to Oakland; and as they could not come, he thought it well to give the coveted places to August and Anna Olsen, whose mother worked in a box-factory and would be glad to have the children looked after.

"What's the matter mit 'em?" he asked anxiously. "Ain't dey goot?"

"Oh, yes they are good," I replied, adding mysteriously. "If two children named August and Anna allow you to call them Hansanella for five weeks without comment, it isn't likely that they would be very fertile in evil doing!"

I had a full year's experience with the false Hansanella and in that time they blighted our supremest joys. There was always a gap in the circle where they stood and they stopped the electric current whenever it reached them. I am more anxious that the Eugenic Societies should eliminate this kind of child from the future than almost any other type. It has chalk and water instead of blood in its veins. It is as cold as if it had been made by machinery and then refrigerated, instead of being brought into being by a mother's love; and it never has an impulse, but just passes through the world mechanically, taking up space that could be better occupied by some warm, struggling, erring, aspiring human creature.

How can I describe Jacob Lavrowsky? There chanced to be a row of little Biblical characters, mostly prophets sitting beside one another about half way back in the room;—Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Elijah and Elisha, but the greatest of these was Jacob. He was one of ten children, the offspring of a couple who kept a second-hand clothing establishment in the vicinity.

Mr. and Mrs. Lavrowsky collected, mended, patched, sold and exchanged cast-off wearing apparel, and the little Lavrowsky's played about in the rags, slept under the counters and ate Heaven knows where, during the term of my acquaintance with them. Jacob differed from all the other of my flock by possessing a premature, thoroughly unchildlike sense of humor. He regarded me as one of the most unaccountable human beings he had ever met, but he had such respect for what he believed to be my good bottom qualities that he constantly tried to conceal from me his feeling that I was probably a little insane. He had large expressive eyes, a flat nose, wide mouth, thin hair, long neck and sallow skin, while his body was so thin and scrawny that his clothes always hung upon him in shapeless folds. His age was five and his point of view that of fifty. As to his toilettes, there must have been a large clothes-bin in the room back of the shop and Jacob must have daily dressed himself from this, leaning over the side and plucking from the varied assortment such articles as pleased his errant fancy. He had no prejudices against bits of feminine attire, often sporting a dark green cashmere basque trimmed with black velvet ribbon and gilt buttons. It was double breasted and when it surmounted a pair of trousers cut to the right length but not altered in width, the effect

would have startled any more exacting community than ours. Jacob was always tired and went through his tasks rather languidly, greatly preferring work to play. All diversions such as marching and circle games struck him as pleasant enough, but childish, and if participated in at all, to be gone through with in an absent-minded and supercilious manner. There were moments when his exotic little personality, standing out from all the rest like an infant Artful Dodger or a caricature of Beau Brummel, seemed to make him wholly alien to the group, yet he was docile and obedient, his only fault being a tendency to strong and highly colored language. To make the marching more effective and develop a better sense of time, I instituted a very simple and rudimentary form of orchestra with a triangle, a tambourine, and finally a drum. When the latter instrument made its first appearance Jacob sought a secluded spot by the piano and gave himself up to a fit of fairly courteous but excessive mirth. "*A drum!*" he exclaimed, between his fits of laughter. "*What'll yer have next? This is a h——l of a school!*"

Just behind Jacob sat two little pink-cheeked girls five and four years old, Violet and Rose Featherstone. Violet brought the younger Rose every day and was a miracle of sisterly devotion. I did not see the mother for some months after the little pair

entered, as she had work that kept her from home during the hours when it was possible for me to call upon her, and she lived at a long distance from the kindergarten in a neighborhood from which none of our other children came.

I had no anxiety about them however, as the looks, behavior, and clothing of all my children was always an absolute test of the conditions prevailing in the home. What was my surprise then, one day to receive a note from a certain Mrs. Hannah Googins, a name not in my register.

She said her Emma Abby had been bringing home pieces of sewing and weaving of late, marked "Violet Featherstone." She would like to see some of Emma Abby's own work and find out whether she had taken that of any other child by mistake. A long and puzzling investigation followed the receipt of this letter and I found that the romantic little Emma Abby Googins, not caring for the name given her by her maternal parent, had assumed that of Violet Featherstone. Also, being an only child and greatly desiring a sister, she had plucked a certain little Nellie Taylor from a family near by, named her "Rose Featherstone" and taken her to and from the kindergarten daily, a distance of at least half a mile of crowded streets. The affair was purely one of innocent romance. Emma Abby Googins never told a fib or committed the

slightest fault or folly save that of burying her name, assuming a more distinguished one, and introducing a sister to me who had no claim to the Googins blood. Her mother was thoroughly mystified by the occurrence and I no less so, but Emma Abby simply opened her blue eyes wider and protested that she "liked to be Violet" and Rose liked to be Rose, and that was the only excuse for her conduct, which she seemed to think needed neither apology nor explanation.

Now comes the darling of the group, the heart's ease, the nonesuch, the Rose of Erin, the lovely, the indescribable Rosaleen Clancy.

We were all working busily and happily one morning when a young woman tapped at the door and led in that flower and pearl of babyhood, the aforesaid Rosaleen.

The young woman said she knew that the kindergarten was full, and indeed had a long waiting list, but the Clancy family had just arrived from Ireland; that there were two little boys; a new baby twenty-four hours old; Mr. Clancy had not yet found work, and could we take care of Rosaleen even for a week or two?

As I looked at the child the remark that we had not a single vacant seat perished, unborn, on my lips. She was about three and a half years old, and was clad in a straight, loose slip of dark blue wool that showed her neck and arms. A little flat,

sort of "pork pie" hat of blue velveteen sat on the back of her adorable head, showing the satiny rings of yellow hair that curled round her ears and hung close to her neck. (No wonder!) She had gray-blue eyes with long upper and under lashes and a perfect mouth that disclosed the pearly teeth usually confined to the heroines of novels. As to her skin you would say that Jersey cream was the principal ingredient in its composition.

The children had stopped their weaving needles and were gazing open-mouthed at this vision of beauty, though Rosaleen had by no means unmasked all her batteries. She came nearer my chair, and without being invited, slipped her hand in mine in a blarneyish and deludthering way not unknown in her native isle. The same Jersey cream had gone into its skin, there were dimples in the knuckles, and baby hand though it was, its satin touch had a thrill in it, and responded instantly to my pressure.

"Do you think we can make room for her, children?" I asked.

Every small boy cried rapturously: "Look Miss Kate! Here's room! I kin scrooge up!" and hoped the Lord would send Rosaleen his way!

"We can't have two children in one seat;" I explained to Rosaleen's sponsor, "because they can't have proper building exercises

nor work to good advantage when they're crowded."

"I kin set on the pianner stool!" gallantly offered Billy Prendergast.

"Perhaps I can borrow a little chair somewhere," I said. "Would you like to stay with us Rosaleen?"

Her only answer (she was richer in beautiful looks than in speech) was to remove her blue velveteen hat and tranquilly placed it on my table. If she was lovely with her hair covered she was still lovelier now; while her smile of assent disclosing as it did, an irresistible dimple, completed our conquest; so that no one in the room (save Hansanella, who went on doggedly with their weaving) would have been parted from the new comer save by fire and the sword.

At one o'clock Bobby Green came back from the noon recess dragging a high chair. It was his own outgrown property and he had asked our Janitor to abbreviate its legs and bring it up stairs.

When Rosaleen sat in it and smiled, a thrill of rapture swept through the small community. The girls thrilled as well as the boys, for Rosaleen's was not a mere sex appeal but practically a universal one.

There was one flaw in our content. Bobby Green's mother arrived shortly after one o'clock in a high state of wrath, and I was

obliged to go out in the hall and calm her nerves.

"I really think Bobby's impulse was an honest one," I said. "He did not know I intended to buy a chair for the new child out of my own salary this afternoon. He probably thought that the high chair was his very own, reasoning as children do, and it was a gallant, generous act. I don't like to have him punished for it, Mrs. Green, and if we both tell him he ought to have asked your permission before giving the chair away, and if I buy you a new one, won't you agree to drop the matter? — Think how manly Bobby was and how generous and thoughtful! If he were mine I couldn't help being proud of him. Just peep in and look at the baby who is sitting in his chair, a little stranger, just come from Ireland to San Francisco."

Mrs. Green peeped in and saw the sun shining on Rosaleen's primrose head. She was stringing beads, while Bobby, Pat and Aaron knelt beside her, palpitating for a chance to serve.

"She's real cute!" whispered Mrs. Green. "Does Bobby act very often like he's doin' now?"

"He's one of the greatest comforts of my life!" I said truly.

"I wish I could say the same!" she retorted. "Well, I came round intendin' to give him a good settlin' but he'd had two

already this week and I guess I'll let it go! We ain't so poverty-struck as some o' the folks in this neighborhood and I guess we can make out to spare a chair, it's little enough to pay for gettin' rid of Bobby."

Two years that miracle of beauty and sweetness, Rosaleen Clancy stayed with us, just as potent an influence as the birds or the flowers, the stories I told, or the music I coaxed from the little upright piano. Her face was not her only fortune for she had a heart of gold. Ireland did indeed have a grievance when Rosaleen left it for America!

This is just a corner of my portrait gallery, which has dozens of other types hanging on the walls clamoring to be described. Some were lovely and some interestingly ugly; some were like lilies growing out of the mud, others had not been quite as able to energize themselves out of their environment and bore the sad traces of it ever with them;—still, they were all absorbingly interesting beyond my power to paint. Month after month they sat together, working, playing, helping, growing—in a word learning how to live, and there in the midst of the group was I, learning my life lesson with them.

The study and the practice of the kindergarten theory of education and of life gave me, while I was still very young, a certain ideal by which to live and work, and

it has never faded.—Never, whether richer or poorer, whether better or worse, in sickness or in health, in prosperity or adversity, never wholly to lose my glimpse of that “celestial light” that childhood-apparalled “Meadow, grove and stream, the earth and every common sight:” and to hold that attitude of mind and heart which gives to life even when it is difficult something of “the glory and the freshness of a dream!”



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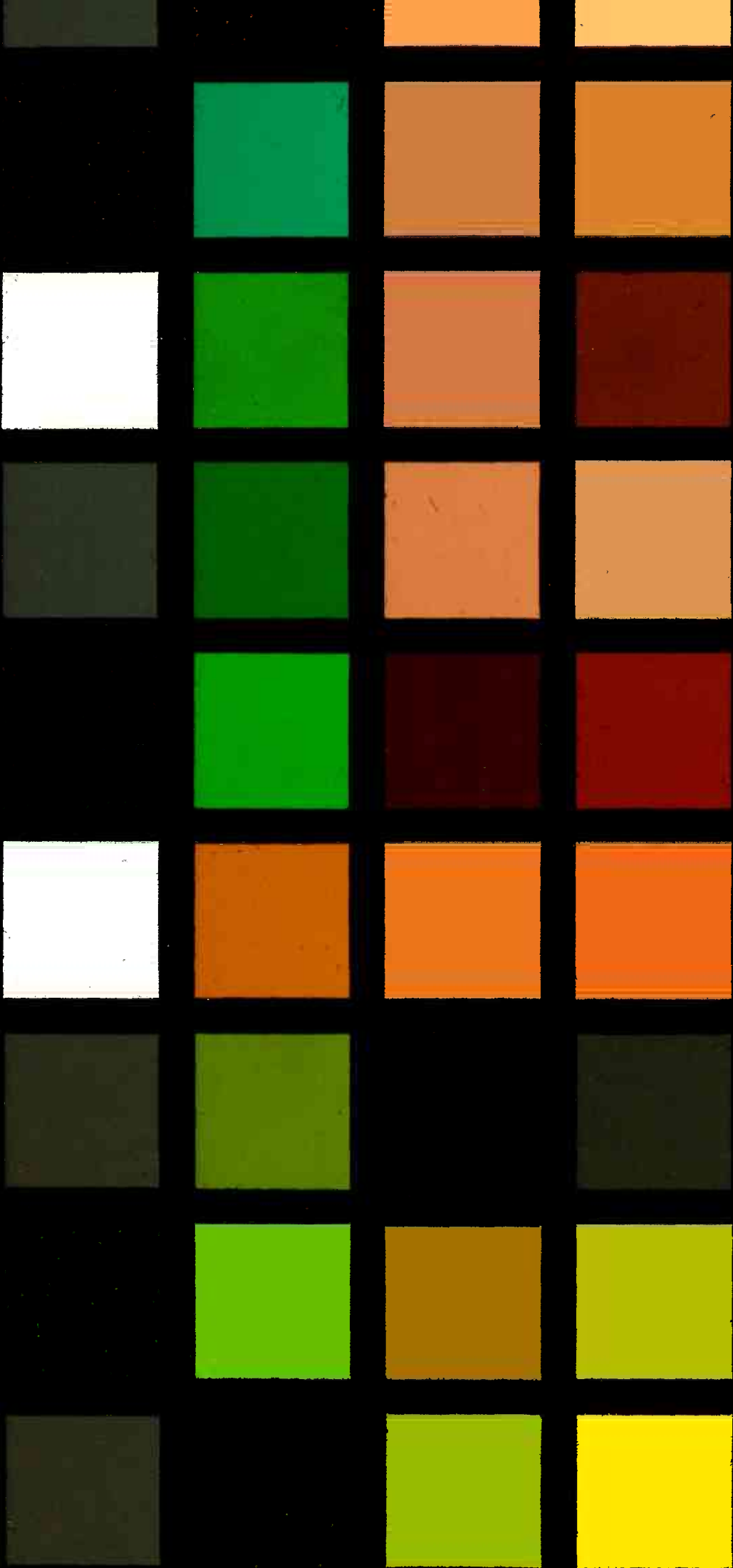


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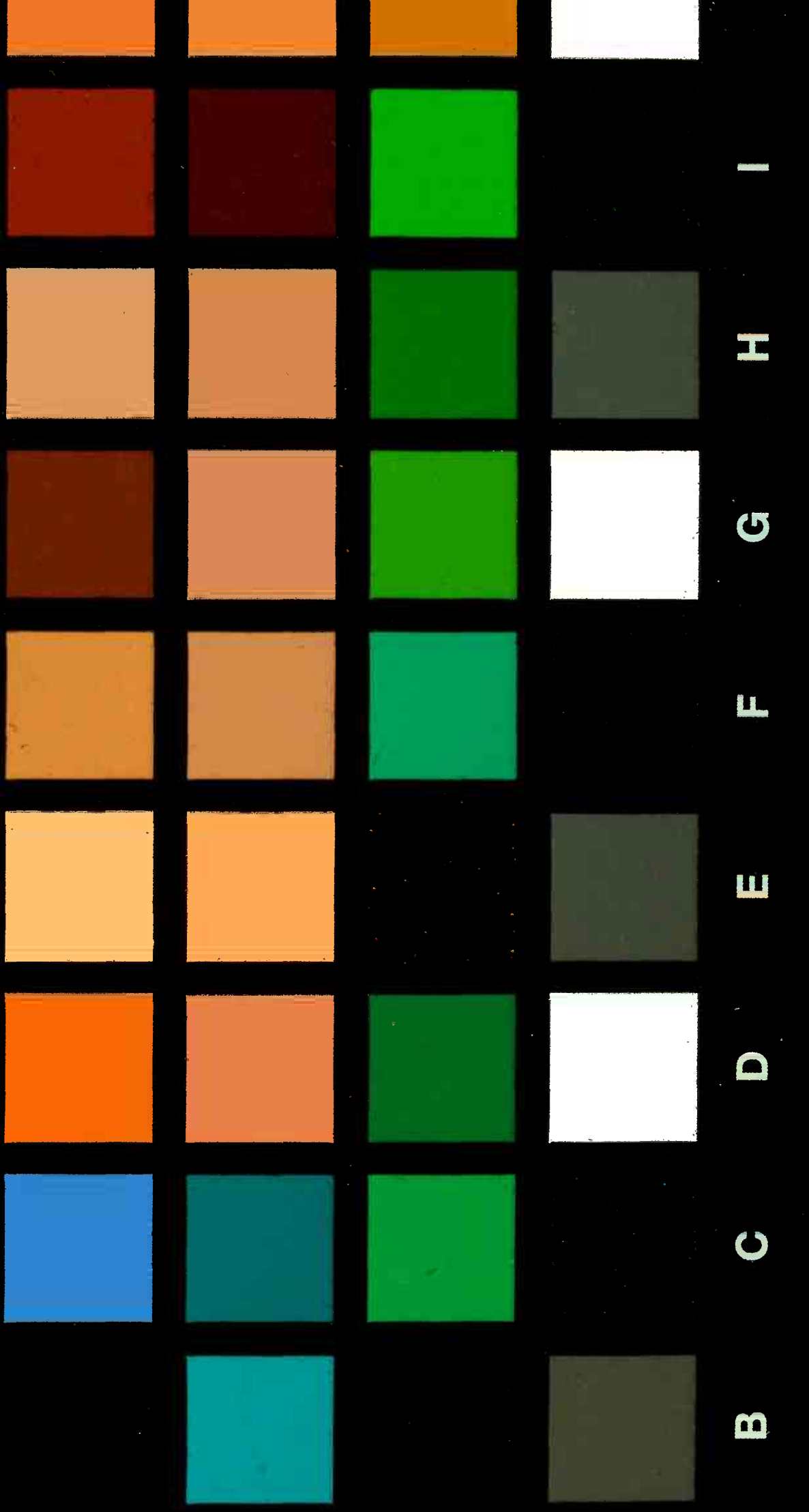
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